

NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S COALITION

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Dear Talks Team

The following arrangements have been agreed for the Talks over the next few weeks. As always, these are subject to change at short notice; but the general framework of three days for each of Strand 1 and Strand 2 and Plenary should hold, even if details within them change. Those members of the Talks Team who cannot attend for any part of the period(s) for which they are responsible should let me know as soon as possible through Ann McCann.

If arrangements change I will write to update you, depending on the notice I get.

Yours sincerely

Bronagh Hinds

Bronagh

• negotiating paper.

1) Full set - Ann.
- Mawitzduft.

Key items for public participation.

• Key components of
inter-linking strands have
to be there?

• governance
• relationships E.W - Council of regions

- political strategic framework with several 'functional' bodies [fed
interf.]
• social & economic development & strategy.
- winning consent (+ a different meaning) - consent = cannot be understood?
role of British: will gov't.
Consent of others must be won. They hold the key.

Structure of Negotiations

3. Negotiations will be organised so that issues are discussed in the following formats:

- Plenary;
- Strand One;
- Strand Two;
- Strand Three; and,
- a Business Committee.

Strand One will cover the relationships within Northern Ireland, including the relationship between any new institutions there and the Westminster Parliament; Strand Two will cover relationships within the island of Ireland; and Strand Three will cover relationships between the British and Irish Governments. Negotiations on Strand One issues will involve the British Government and the political parties. Negotiations on Strand Three issues will be between the two Governments. Negotiations in all other formats will involve the British and Irish Governments and the political parties.

4. The British Government will chair Strand One of the negotiations and the British and Irish Governments will jointly chair Strand Three. Senator George Mitchell, General John de Chastelain and Prime Minister Harri Holkeri will chair the various aspects of the negotiations which require independent chairmanship, as follows:

- Senator Mitchell (Plenary);
- General de Chastelain (Strand Two and the Business Committee); and
- Prime Minister Holkeri (Alternate Chairman for the Plenary, Strand Two and the Business Committee).

5. Where appropriate, other committees and sub-committees of the negotiations may be established among the participants in the format to which the sub-group relates. Committees and sub-committees shall be chaired by the relevant Chairman or, by agreement among the participants in that format, by a person nominated by the Chairman.

Role and Responsibility of Chairmen

6. The designated Chairmen shall preside over all the business of the negotiations and will exercise their functions impartially at all times.
7. The Chairmen will moderate in all meetings to allow an opportunity for full discussion of issues on the agenda, guided by the aim of securing agreement of as broad a spectrum of participation as is possible, and doing so as expeditiously and efficiently as possible.
8. In their conduct of these proceedings, all Chairmen will be governed by these rules of procedure, having due regard to the views of the Business Committee on the arrangements of business and the exercise of their functions.
9. The Chairmen will be bound by the same requirement for confidentiality as the participants.
10. The Chairmen may bring forward specific suggestions if it is regarded as helpful by the relevant delegations.

Sequence of the Negotiations

11. Following the conclusion of the Opening Plenary, the appropriate Chairmen will convene meetings of the negotiations within the three strands and any committees or sub-committees subject to their having regard to the views of the Business Committee. Negotiations in each strand will open on the same day and proceed in parallel, consistent with the provisions of paragraph 14.
12. The Independent Chairman of the Plenary may convene further meetings of the Plenary if he considers such meetings to be necessary in the light of developments across the negotiations as a whole. He shall, in addition, convene further plenary meetings at the request of the Business Committee.

Business Committee

13. The Business Committee shall comprise up to two representatives of each participating delegation. It will co-ordinate the progress and procedures of the negotiations. It will not deal with the substance of the negotiations but will address unresolved procedural issues. It may also determine the modalities for dealing with any issue which does not fall exclusively within any of the three strands.

TALKS TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

Monica McWilliams	Strands 1,2,3 & Business Committee
Pearl Sagar	Strands 1,2,3 & Decommissioning Sub-Committee
Bronagh Hinds	Strand 1,2,3 & Business Committee
Kate Fearon	Strand 1
Elizabeth Meehan	Strand 1
Avila Kilmurray	Strand 2
Jane Wilde	Strand 2
May Blood	Strand 3) Subject to workload
Felicity Huston	Strand 3)
Brenda Callaghan	Decommissioning Sub-Committee
Annie Campbell	Confidence Building Sub-Committee
Barbara McCabe	Confidence Building Sub-Committee
Diane Greer	Alternatives/additional members
Margaret Logue	Decommissioning and Confidence Building Cmt
Robin Whitaker	Forum Link

BRIEFING NOTE B

NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S COALITION POSITION ON STRANDS 1, 2, AND 3.

1. *Principles and Requirements of Process.*
 - 1.1. Acceptance of consent should mean the widest possible consent, not simple majority.
 - a) A commitment to work to win consent inside the Talks through sufficient consent of all parties, not two trading blocks.
 - b) A commitment to collective responsibility for the outcome and for being honest about the compromise, so there is a shared project to put to people.
 - c) A commitment to collective leadership to winning the greatest possible majority among the people through education, information and promotion of the agreed outcome on a common platform not on an adversarial basis.
 - 1.2. There must be a willingness to examine the need for change and the radicalisation of democracy at all levels of society as well as in the course of dealing with the constitutional issue.
 - 1.3. There should be inclusion of people as far as possible in the dialogue in order to assist us to shape the outcome and prepare for change.
 - 1.4. Any agreement, including the institutions and arrangements which are part of it, must be based on principles of inclusion, equity and human rights.
 - 1.5. It must broaden and deepen democracy and draw on the best lessons of partnership, co-operation and collaboration. It should address the concept of participatory democracy and find ways of engaging people with politicians, recognising them as active citizens, informing, influencing and taking part in decisions which affect their lives.
 - 1.6. It must go beyond the confines of the two main traditions in Northern Ireland and must specifically include measures to ensure an equal outcome for women with men.
 - 1.7. It should be characterised by openness and be capable of flexibility and development, while offering people the stability of a solid framework based on a shared commitment by political structures.

2 *Principles and Requirements of Institutions and Arrangements*

- 2.1 Any institutions and arrangements must be capable of interfacing with, and developing a constructive and developmental relationship with the regions of the United Kingdom, Ireland and the European Union.
- 2.2 The agreed institutions and arrangements must be inclusive in nature, ensuring the representation of all traditions on the island.
- 2.3 North/South institutional arrangements should specifically address the need to establish common principles of civil, religious and human rights, rooted in the concepts of equity and pluralism.
- 2.4 Any new arrangements must ensure that gender equality is secured through new electoral arrangements and appropriate support for equity in representation.
- 2.5 Any new arrangements should entail decision-making structures that are closer to people and local communities.
- 2.6 North/South bodies should have appropriate decision-making powers to enable them effectively to develop strategic frameworks for economic and social development; joint action on shared natural and physical assets, and the implementation of EU policy on inter-regional development and harmonisation.
- 2.7 There must be compliance with E.U. and other international obligations and protection for civic, political, social and cultural rights. The British and Irish governments should have joint responsibility for citizenship, and for protection of individual and collective rights.
- 2.8 Structures and arrangements should be developed to facilitate the weaving of a web of relationships on an East/West basis as well as North/South. A Council of the Regions of Britain and Ireland might be considered.
- 2.9 Within Northern Ireland, the Coalition envisages the establishment of a Northern Ireland Assembly comprising of
 - a) an elected chamber of directly elected politicians;
 - b) a civic chamber comprised of business, trade union, community and voluntary sector interests indirectly elected through electoral colleges.

The electoral system chosen should deliver 50/50 gender balanced arrangements in both chambers.

2.10 The Inter-Governmental Conference should continue in existence and should help to manage a recognised transition period which will include

i) immediate change arising out of the agreement;

ii) management of potential further development and change

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BRIEFING NOTE C

NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S COALITION POSITION ON RELEVANT COMMUNITY ISSUES

1. *Inclusion of Local Communities*

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition believes in the importance of a process to enable local communities and previously excluded groups, to become involved in a movement that will seek to enable the Peace Process.
- 1.2 To this end the emphasis of the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation on aspects of social inclusion has been particularly helpful, as has been its ability to prioritise funding for those groups and areas that have suffered most severely from the impact of the conflict in the North.
- 1.3 The Coalition feels that the Peace Process must be developed where possible as an open and accessible system that rests on a broad base of participation and responsibility rather than relying exclusively on the 'owners' of the negotiating table. We see the Peace Process as an interdependent model between local communities, middle-range decision-makers and the political leadership.
- 1.4 It is important to actively encourage the availability of social space to facilitate discussion of aspects of the Peace Process and of potential changes at local community level.

2. *Addressing the Politically Marginalised*

- 2.1 The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition recognises the particularly important role played by social activist and politicians representing groups that are often portrayed as extremists in promoting and developing the Peace Process. It is crucial that every effort is made to continue to facilitate the involvement of such groups and to recognise the pressures that they are often under within their own communities.
- 2.2 Self-help work with politically motivated ex-prisoner groups and victims of the violence have played an important role in addressing trauma and achieving inclusion. This area of work however requires support.
- 2.3 Recent initiatives in the area of community and restorative justice are to be welcomed in both Loyalist and Republican communities. This is particularly important where such models are based on a respect for human rights and a commitment to a non-violent approach and operate as an effectual alternative to punishment beatings.

2.4 The increasing use of international examples from other divided societies that have experienced conflict is also to be welcomed given the positive frame it has provided for consideration of divisions within Northern Ireland.

2.5 While the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition recognises the sensitivities attached to the issue, it accepts that the early release of politically motivated prisoners remains high on the agenda of many local communities throughout Northern Ireland. The experience of other jurisdictions is that this is a critical element in any developing Peace Process.

3 *Promoting Peacebuilding and Reconciliation*

3.1 The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition accepts the importance of developing a peacebuilding process within which reconciliation can be firmly located. However, the Coalition does not see 'peace and reconciliation' as short-term outputs, but instead understands that if a society has invested year's of energy, time and money in maintaining divisions, it is likely to take the same time period, as well as energy and money, to rebuild relationships.

3.2 The Women's Coalition believe that it is important that imaginative approaches are adopted to enable communities to remember past hurts and injustices as well as to seek the changes that the future demands.

3.3 It is important that approaches to community relations in Northern Ireland are not viewed as quick fixes to community alienation, but instead are informed by a structural commitment to equality, human rights and genuine community inclusion.

3.4 The Women's Coalition firmly believes that it is critical that Government accepts and acknowledges its role in peacebuilding and reconciliation in Northern Ireland not only as a facilitator but also as an active party in the conflict and the hurts inflicted and received.

4 *Supporting the Community Infrastructure*

4.1 The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition has welcomed the increased recognition of the contribution of the community and voluntary sector to the partnership approach in Northern Ireland. It has felt that this has been particularly well expressed through the E.U. District Partnerships with their emphasis on a balanced community and gender representation. This form of participatory democracy should be used as a model for the Civic Chamber proposed by the Women's Coalition under Strand 1 and the North/South Advisory Body which is suggested to complement the more formal Forum for social and Economic co-operation under Strand 2.

- 4.2 If the community and social organisations are to continue to play an important role in social inclusion and peacebuilding then it is essential that they are adequately resourced and supported on a long-term basis. The Women's Coalition believes that this is particularly important with regard to community based women's groups.
- 4.3 It is important that the Government recognises that the community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland have learnt how to balance their responsibilities and provision with the political sensitivities in which they work. This is a valuable attribute which should not be discounted or undermined by overly simplistic categorisation of the work undertaken. The Government should value the contribution of the community and voluntary sector to the peacebuilding process.

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